12:Evans-Pritchard E-5 (1930-1931) 1933
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Nuer[1] and Dinka customs and languages are far too similar for any doubt to arise about their common origin, but in the present state of our knowledge even a tentative reconstruction of their historical relations with each other which led to the formation of two distinct cultures is out of the question. Our knowledge of neither is adequate, and probably never will be adequate, to solve historical problems of this kind. Moreover, it is not yet certain whether the many Dinka tribes differ from each other sufficiently for some of them to approach the Nuer in their culture more closely than they approach other members of their own conglomerate, though, personally, I hold this to be highly improbable. The Atwot are a peculiar case, for they speak a dialect of Nuer but are alleged to approximate more closely to some of the Dinka tribes in other elements of their culture. On the other hand, the Jekany tribes, who to-day have a typically Nuer culture, appear to be of Dinka origin. Even were we in possession of more knowledge about both nations we should still have to face the insuperable difficulty that not only have Dinka and Nuer almost certainly a common cultural origin but that there has also been continuous contact between them which has led to extensive borrowing by the Nuer from the Dinka, and possibly the process has been mutual, so that one cannot know for sure whether a similar trait in the two cultures is due to their common cultural origin or to later borrowing.

Moreover, any attempt to differentiate between the two peoples by a comparison between their physical characters is equally dangerous until a very large number of individuals whose ancestry is well known have been measured. I have little doubt myself that there are physical differences between Nuer and Dinka, though both are undoubtedly of the same race. But we have to remember that there has been absorption of Dinka on a gigantic scale by Nuer invasions during the first half of the 19th century. At that time most of the country east of the Nile was occupied by Dinka tribes who were dispersed and largely absorbed by the Nuer who crossed the Nile in waves from their home on the west bank. To such an extent were Dinka assimilated to Nuer that I consider it safe to say that not more than 50 per cent. of the Nuer to the east of the Nile are of pure descent, and though on the west bank the process

[1] I use the word "Nuer" but with a protest. They call themselves "Nath" (ding-cat), and if ever a more ambitious account of them is written this term will be used.

14: Huffman M-5 (no date) 1931
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101 White and the Blue Nile. The northern and southern boundaries of the tribe are about 10° northern latitude (200 miles south of Khartoum) and the north-eastern shores of Lake Victoria respectively.

144 177 Most nearly related to the Nuer are the Dinka and Shilluk. The latter have numerous sub-sections, such as the Anuak in the Sobat river system, the Jur south-west of the Bahr-el-Ghazal, the Gang or Acholi north-east of Lake Albert, and the Jaluo (Nilotic Kavirondo, as opposed to the Bantu-speaking Kavirondo) in Uganda and Kenya Colony. Nuer, Dinka, and Shilluk show a distinct linguistic affinity, the Nuer and Dinka languages being closely related. The second main group of Nilotic tribes is represented in the Sudan by the Bari, Latuko, and Dongotono. These, on the other hand, show ethnic linguistic relations to the Masai, Nandi, and kindred tribes.

It is natural that people scattered over so large a territory should differ in appearance and culture, yet with all this they show unmistakable common features in language as well as in their ethnic characteristics. It is worth noting that the Nubian tribes living on the shores of the Nile south of Aswan speak a language related to the Nilotic tongues.

144 One may assume that the Nilotic people are the result of a symbiosis and miscegenation between an autochthonous negro population and immigrating eastern Hamitic tribes. The Hamitic element, in physical appearance, culture, and language, is stronger in the Bari-Latuko-Dongotono group; they are therefore called Niloto-Hamitic, as opposed to the northern (Dinka-Nuer-Shilluk) Niloto-Sudanic group.

141 Generally speaking, the Nilotic tribes are tall, rather lean, narrow in the shoulders, their arms and their legs,

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with thin calves, are long, their hands and feet small. The skin is dark. Men with well-shaped features, thin lips, and noses with high bridges and narrow nostrils are not unfrequently met.

Most of the men are fierce, proud, and even haughty in aspect. The Nuer are essentially pastoral; some kind of farming is done, fishing and hunting are also common, but the only occupation worthy of a man is to look after his cattle. The attachment of a man to his cows and of a boy to the bull with which his father presents him may almost be called religious. The one real sport for men is fighting, or cattle raiding, which is practically the same thing. These predatory expeditions are carried on wherever opportunity offers and are a cause of constant friction among the tribes. In their folk-lore tales a favourite subject is the story of cattle fights.

The main groups of the Nuer and the districts in which they live are:[1]

Garjok, Garjak, Jekiang (Nasser District) .	200,000
Lau (Abwong District)	100,000
Gaweir (Fanjak District)	30,000
Lak and Thiang (Zeraf Island, Fanjak District)	40,000
Western Nuer (Yivrol District) . . .	60,000

One group, the Atwot, have partly adopted Dinka as their language.

The Nuer houses lie close to large river systems, so that during the rains a large part of their country is a great swamp, the villages being mostly situated on ridges along the rivers. The chief vegetation is high grass, interspersed with single trees or groups of trees. The country on the upper Sobat, near or in Abyssinia, is however better wooded and has sparse forests.

[1] Cf. Report of the Relief Language Conference 1918, London 1918.

173 The Nuer people came to this country long ago, many, many years ago. In a country far away to the west, over across the Nile, there were many, many people.

Latjor, one of the Nuer chiefs, called his people to accompany him as he wanted to go to a distant country where there were no people.

They started out, travelling eastward. They came to the Nile at a point about ten miles south of the present site of Melut. They had no boats. The river was wide. They did not know how they could get across.

While they waited on the bank, talking the matter over, they saw a large blue heron standing in the middle of the river. They wondered among themselves whether it was standing on an island or on floating grass or possibly on a tree. Latjor, their leader, a tall, fearless man, said he would try to wade out to it and investigate.

He waded in. The water was ankle deep, then knee deep. A little farther on it was waist deep, but he waded clear over to the other side. Then his people were not afraid but crossed over after him.

This fording place is called the Ford of the Blue Heron because the blue heron showed it to them.

Latjor led his people eastward, seeking for a good location until they reached Abyssinia. An epidemic of smallpox killed many of his Nuer. Those who remained returned westward and settled in the uninhabited area through which they had passed. Latjor settled in Dwac which is a village in the Garjiok section. He named the different sections of Nuerland after his sons—Garjak, Garjiok, Lau, Gagwang, Geuwar, and Lak.

APPEARANCE AND CLOTHING

[147] 302 The Nuer man is tall, muscular, straight of back, and clear-eyed. He powders his whole body with ashes made from

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Fig. 1. A Nuer, wearing the skin of a wildcat as a loin-cloth

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Fig. 2. A Nuer married woman

[facing p. 167]